**Lesson 13**

**30, 31 August 2021**

**Genesis 11:1-9**

**Jen Wilkin, *God of Creation* video #10, “Dispersion and Descent”, part 2**

**Review** – Last week we saw where the various people groups descended from Noah’s sons settled. We also saw how Noah’s prophecies concerning his three sons were fulfilled, with the Canaanites being conquered by the Israelites (descendants of Shem) and the descendants of Japheth sharing in the spiritual wealth of Shem’s descendants.

**Tower of Babel** – The account of the tower of Babel comes *after* the chapter on the Table of Nations, but it actually preceded the dispersion chronologically. In Genesis 11 Moses explains *how and why* the dispersion came to be. Great emphasis is given to *language* in this account, both in the fact that Moses tells us that everyone spoke the same language originally and in how the people talk about what they are going to do. They say, “**Come, let us** build,” which is very reminiscent of what God said about creating mankind, i.e. “**Come let us** make man in our image…” In fact, the people of Babel used this phrase three times. They were saying in effect, “Come, let us do what we want…Come, let us do what we want…Come, let us do what we want,” in defiance of what God had commanded. We see human beings taking counsel with each other in the same way that God took counsel with Himself in the creation account.

There must not have been much natural stone in the plain of Shinar since the people decided to make bricks to build their tower. That would require a lot of time and effort, so they were showing just how determined they were to follow their own desire in this project.

**Their Goals** – They want to build a tower and a city and to make a name for themselves. God is jealous for His name and His glory, and here we have humans wanting to make their names great. **The tower:** what they were actually building was a *ziggurat*, a stepped building shaped somewhat like a pyramid. What they wanted to do was to build a *stairway to heaven*. This echoes what Lucifer (Satan) said when he rebelled against God. He said that he wanted to ascend to the heavens, even above God. (See Isaiah 14:13-16.) **The city:** The city they wanted to establish was a symbol of self-sufficiency. Just as Cain rebelled against God’s curse on him and tried to put down roots instead of wandering, so these people were defying God’s mandate to fill the earth. God was against their building project, not because it is wrong to live in cities and certainly not because He wanted to stifle their God-given creativity. But the building of Babel was not about bringing order out of chaos and thereby bringing glory to God, but about bringing glory to the name of the men involved.

**“The Lord Came Down To See the Tower and the City”** – The objective of the people of Babel was to build a tower that would reach the heavens. But notice that no matter how high this tower was, God had to come DOWN to see it. In other words, He was very, very high above their paltry efforts**.**

**The Progression of Sin** – Notice how sin has progressed in this account. Adam and Eve’s sin was rather clumsy and not well thought out. Cain’s sin was more bold. But now mankind has progressed to the point that they are able to sit down and figure out ways to *sin together*. God sees this, and so He reestablishes Himself as the Creator-God when He says, “***Come, let us*** go down and confuse their language.”

**“Babel”** – In Babylonian, the word *babel* means “gate of God.” But in Hebrew it means “confusion.” By confusing their language and in dispersing them, God ensures that they will do what He had commanded, i.e. to be fruitful and multiply and spread over the earth. His plans will not be thwarted. By this time in human history, all human language has become the language of disobedience.

**What Redeeming “Partner Story” Corresponds to the Tower of Babel?** – In the New Testament in the books of Acts, the account of the Day of Pentecost makes all of this make sense. At that point, there were many people of many different languages who needed to hear one message, the message of salvation through faith in Christ. God sent His Holy Spirit down and enabled His followers to speak all the languages of the known world so that the people gathered in Jerusalem could hear the Gospel. This was a reverse action to what happened at Babel.

**Finding “Our Story” in the Story of Babel** – We all find ourselves wanting to build ourselves “cities” of our own self-sufficiency. We want to put up towers of self-elevation and of our own self-worship. And like the ancients before us, we are willing to do so at great cost, brick by brick. Think about where your comfort lies and where you find your security and self esteem. Is it in your “stuff”? You will go to great lengths to surround yourself with all the things you think you need so you will not perceive your need of anything, and certainly not God.

We love to build cities, and we love to build towers. But as a people of God we are not to build our own habitations. Rather, as 1 Peter 2:5 tells us, we are to be “living stones built together into a habitation for the Lord.”

**Our Purpose for Existing** – Our purpose is to announce the glory of God at every turn. 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us that we are “new creations in Christ.” We saw God speaking, “It is finished!” over the first creative act in Genesis 1. And we saw Christ speaking, “It is finished!” over the second creative act of redemption in the gospels. But we will hear God say, “It is finished!” once again in Revelation 21:1-7 when He completes the New Jerusalem. He says, “Behold, I am making all things new…It is done!”